

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1.-7. (canceled)

8. (currently amended) An endoscopic sample taker for collecting a sample of cartilage material, comprising:

a hollow shank having a distal end and a proximal end;

a scoop fixedly connected to said distal end of said hollow shank and defining a spoon-shaped trough having an opening and a closed end;

a handling means connected at said proximal end of said hollow shaft and having an actuation mechanism;

an actuating rod having a distal end and a proximal end axially movable in said hollow shank, said proximal end of said actuating rod releasably connectable with said actuation mechanism; and

a covering comprising a tongue having a longitudinal length with a first end fastened proximate said distal end of said actuating rod and a second distal end, ~~a position of~~ said tongue being slidably adjustable so that said tongue slides along a longitudinal length of said tongue ~~via~~ in response to axial adjustment of said actuating rod to an adjusted position between a closure position and an open position, wherein said open position of said tongue allows ingress of the cartilage material to said trough and said closure position covers said trough to prevent loss of the cartilage material from said trough, said adjusted position being maintained without external force on said actuating rod.

9. (canceled)

10. (currently amended) The endoscopic sample taker of claim 8, wherein said trough comprises an edge defining a shape of said opening of said trough, said tongue

sufficiently covering said trough in said closed position so that an entire sample within the volume defined between said opening and said closed end is prevented from leaving said trough.

11. (currently amended) The endoscopic sample taker of claim 8, further comprising a holding-down device for guiding said tongue during the displacement thereof along the longitudinal length of said tongue and holding said tongue at said closure position.

12. (previously presented) The endoscopic sample taker of claim 8, wherein said scoop comprises an edge forming said trough and said edge is inclined at an angle relative to a longitudinal axis of said hollow shank such that a retrograde inclination is exhibited by said edge of said scoop.

13. (currently amended) The endoscopic sample taker of claim 12, wherein said tongue is made of a bendable elastic material.

14. (currently amended) The endoscopic sample taker of claim 8, wherein said tongue comprises a front cutting edge for facilitating separation of the sample of cartilage material.

15. (previously presented) The endoscopic sample taker of claim 8, wherein a volume defined between said opening and said closed end of said trough of said scoop is separated from a volume defined by said hollow shank such that the volume defined by said trough is not in direct communication with the volume defined by said hollow shank.

16. (previously presented) The endoscopic sample taker of claim 8, wherein an entire volume defined between said opening and said closed end of said trough of said scoop is arranged distally from said distal end of said hollow shank by an axial distance.

17. (currently amended) An The endoscopic sample taker of ~~claim 8~~, comprising:

a hollow shank having a distal end and a proximal end;

a scoop fixedly connected to said distal end of said hollow shank and defining a spoon-shaped trough having an opening and a closed end;

a handling means connected at said proximal end of said hollow shaft and having an actuation mechanism;

an actuating rod having a distal end and a proximal end axially movable in said hollow shank, said proximal end of said actuating rod releasably connectable with said actuation mechanism; and

a covering comprising a tongue having a longitudinal length with a first end fastened proximate said distal end of said actuating rod and a second distal end, a position of said tongue being adjustable along a longitudinal length of said tongue via said actuating rod to an adjusted position between a closure position and an open position, wherein said open position of said tongue allows ingress of the cartilage material to said trough and said closure position covers said trough to prevent loss of the cartilage material from said trough, said adjusted position being maintained without external force on said actuating rod, wherein said tongue comprises a thin strip having a longitudinal length, wherein the position of said covering is adjustable by axially displacing the thin strip along the longitudinal length thereof of the thin strip so that the strip moves across the opening defined by said spoon-shaped trough in response to said actuating rod.

18. (currently amended) The endoscopic sample taker of claim 17, further comprising a holding-down device for guiding said thin strip during the displacement thereof and holding said tongue at said closure position.

19. (new) The endoscopic sample taken of claims 8, wherein said actuating mechanism comprises a sleeve connected to said handling means, an external ring axially displaceably arranged outside said sleeve, an inner ring arranged inside said sleeve, and a fastening bar passing through said inner and external rings, said actuating rod being actuatable by axial movement of said outer ring.